

Account vanishing

This page in a nutshell: **Account vanishing** is *one of* the ways to indicate a **permanent** leave from Wikimedia project, similar to "close account" in some other websites. It may remove your (user)name from history of pages you edits, and much other personal information and discussions about user conduct.



- To preserve attribution, it is not possible to delete an account.
- Vanishing does not guarantee anonymity. Association may still be easily found in various ways.
- Even if vanish is intended to be permanent, it may still be reversed in cases where the vanish should not have happened.

Are you in the right place?



- If you want to leave Wikimedia projects but do not care in your past associations or intend to rejoin Wikipedia in the future, simply stop editing. You may optionally add `{{Retired}}` to your userpage.
- If you want to edit using another username, you should use changing username or clean start instead.
- If you want to hide personal information, consider oversight.

The **account vanishing** process was first proposed on MeatballWiki; see MeatBall:RightToVanish. The principle it embodies is that contributors leaving a project permanently may have any personal contributions unrelated to the core mission of the project removed.^[1] It is similar to the WikiMindWipe, but far less reaching. In the context of the Wikimedia Foundation, the term was first used on the English Wikipedia, where it became a customary courtesy before the formation of the Foundation. (See Wikipedia:Courtesy vanishing).

Like the English Wikipedia, most other Wikimedia projects tolerate the "vanishing" of users who wish to leave permanently. Vanishing is not a right or guarantee but rather a courtesy extended to valued contributors who wish to leave. Since contributions are made under the GFDL or CC-BY-SA, which provide an irrevocable license, there is no basis in law or contract for contributors to remove either content they have contributed or attribution for the same.

How a request to vanish may be fulfilled

- *Username* – Usernames cannot normally be deleted, but can sometimes be changed. Even if this is done, it may still be possible to link your new and old names with a minimal degree of work.
- *Work on the project* – Your work, including "signatures" (text indicating your authorship of comments) on all but your own user and talk pages, will usually **not** be changed or removed. To

change these would be a major source of disruption. Individual revisions of individual pages that contain personally identifying information may be oversighted instead.

- User pages, and their subpages, and other non-article pages that no others have substantively contributed to and whose existence does not impact the project, may be courtesy blanked or deleted. User talk pages are rarely deleted.
- *Logs* – Administrative and editorial logs showing matters you have been involved with, during your career as an editor, such as your edit history on other pages, will usually remain accessible under your old name.
- *Related matters* discussed in more detail below include: making a clean start, removal of personal information from public viewing, and other actions you can take.

Personal information and its removal

Definition of personal information: Information you provide us or information we collect from you that could be used to personally identify you. To be clear, while we do not necessarily collect all of the following types of information, we consider at least the following to be “personal information” if it is otherwise nonpublic and can be used to identify you:

- (a) your real name, address, phone number, email address, password, identification number on government-issued ID, IP address, user-agent information, credit card number;
- (b) when associated with one of the items in subsection (a), any sensitive data such as date of birth, gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origins, marital or familial status, medical conditions or disabilities, political affiliation, and religion; and
- (c) any of the items in subsections (a) or (b) when associated with your user account.

Two policies govern personal information. Individuals in their role as editors, contributors and readers of Wikimedia projects, should refer to the privacy policy. Information on individuals forming part of an encyclopedia article, are subject to the resolution on biographies of living people. "Account vanishing" relates specifically to the former.

- The Wikimedia projects will delete personal information about **editors and contributors** (most likely on user and user talk pages) at their request, provided it is not needed for administrative reasons (which are generally limited to dealing with site misuse issues).
- Personal information related to **encyclopedia articles and persons mentioned therein** are not part of this process. Instead, please see the relevant editorial policy on biographical articles, which contains full details of editorial directives, and actions to take if dissatisfied.

Alternative measures

In general, involuntary disclosure of personal information is dealt with via oversight; there is no need to vanish unless the publicly known information is sufficiently notorious and accessible that oversight is no protection.

Also usernames can often be changed, subject to broad conditions and processes.

If you have used your real name, or a longstanding pen name, on Wikimedia projects then in principle everything you write can be traced to that name, and thus to you, as discussed above. However, if you decide to leave Wikimedia projects, there are a few steps that you can take to weaken that connection. They are:

1. Change your username to some other name, one which is not directly associated with you (see [Changing username](#)).
2. Change references to your former username to be referenced to your replacement username (you can do this yourself).
3. Delete your existing user and user subpages (contact an administrator). User talk pages are only deleted in some cases.
4. While logged in under your old username, create new user and user talk pages for your old account, containing a brief note indicating that you have left Wikimedia projects and asking that people not refer to you by your name.

Be aware that any edits or posts you make, will appear in page history under the account you used at the time. Therefore take care with your login name usage, and be very careful not to edit your old pages or pages you habitually visit, when you are logged in with a name you do not want associated with that account.

How to request a vanishing

If you wish to vanish, visit [Special:GlobalVanishRequest](#) to access the vanish request interface. Requests will be processed by [global renamers](#) or [stewards](#).

Notes

- Please be aware that all global renames are publicly logged, only the request details are private. A record of requests are kept and can be seen by current renamers, stewards, and Wikimedia Foundation staff.
- Courtesy vanishing is generally not available for users who are currently locked or blocked.
- After your account is vanished, it will automatically be locked by User:AccountVanishRequests. Therefore, you will no longer be able to use the vanished account. In some cases, the lock may also be applied manually by a steward.

Note

1. What is deemed to be related to the vision of various projects is left to local discretion, but typically involves a project's informational content rather than its maintenance/administrative side.

See also

- [Wikipedia:Courtesy vanishing](#)
 - [c2:WikiSuicide](#), [c2:WikiMindWipe](#)
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